

# Coping with Changes

*Brought by COVID-19*



## Tips for Working From Home

Working from home - for some the norm, but just an occasional option for others - has become the new normal for most in a COVID-19 world. It can be a big adjustment mentally, physically, and emotionally. Adding to the challenge, some households are now managing two or more work-from-home offices and a make-shift one room schoolhouse. Settling into the second or third week of working from home has many pondering, "How can this be better?" Maybe emotions are running high, or neck and shoulder aches and pains are starting to set in. Either way, it isn't too late to take charge of the situation and improve the work-from-home experience.

### Step 1: Setting up a good home office space

Setting up an ergonomically sound and reliable office space can make a huge difference in mental focus, productivity and physical health. [Here are some helpful tips](#), whether you're new to working from home or not. If you find yourself suffering from back pain, this [article](#) has many useful tips. Finally, it's important to remember that no matter how ergonomic your work station, prolonged periods of sitting are detrimental to health and wellbeing. Set a timer to remind yourself to get up and move once per hour. You can take a short walk or try these [desk stretches](#) to loosen your muscles. The University of Minnesota's Department of Environmental Health & Safety has developed tips for [laptop ergonomics](#) and University Health and Safety has [suggested tips for workspace ergonomics](#) while working from home.

### Step 2: Navigating how to work effectively at home

Perhaps the biggest challenge of all is developing and maintaining a new routine that will work for every member of the household. One thing experts agree on is that maintaining routine is key, especially for children who often crave structure. It's good for adults, too. Our brains become very conditioned to the daily motions we go through. You can use this to your advantage to get the most productivity out of your work from home day. By waking at the same time each morning and sticking to your normal morning routine, you are sending the signal to your brain that it is time to transition into work mode. Staying in pajamas and working from the bedroom or the sofa (all signals of rest and relaxation) confuses the brain and may lead to a lack of motivation. Get dressed every morning, comb your hair, and go to a designated work space or home office at the same time each day. If everyone in the household can maintain a similar schedule, then there will be fewer distractions to navigate. Click for more [tips on how to make working from home work for you](#). More on healthy routines can be found [here](#). And finally, tips for [how to reinvigorate](#) your work from home routine.

Finally, the importance of communication can't be overstated. Does someone have a big presentation to give? A particularly tight deadline? Be sure to talk about the needs of each household member each day to help minimize tension and be sure everyone's needs are met. Here are [communication tips](#) to help you connect and communicate effectively.



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## **Step 3: Balance working at home with managing the education of your child/children**

It's important to acknowledge that it's not ideal to be doing two things at once - working and educating children are each worthy and demanding of time, energy and attention in their own right. The best we can do is employ strategies to make the best of a difficult situation - offering ourselves and each other [kindness and compassion](#) along the way, and [nurturing our relationships](#). Here are some [helpful tips and strategies](#) to make balancing everything a bit easier. Also, check out our companion resource, 'Managing Learning at Home for Elementary and Middle School-Aged Kids' which can be accessed on the [Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing's COVID-19 Resource Page](#).

## **Step 4: Infuse some fun to beat the stress and boredom of working at home**

There may be new stressors in your daily life. Perhaps you're being forced to cook more. The whole family is home and looking to eat three times per day. Get creative and make cooking a fun family event. Procuring groceries can pose a challenge right now, so plan ahead and challenge your family to expand their taste buds. Plant-based recipes are not only good for your health and the health of the planet, they can be made with pantry staples that are affordable and accessible for even the youngest home chefs. Take this [Moroccan Chickpeas with Tomato](#) recipe for example. Everything but the onion is shelf stable, and even onions last for weeks in the refrigerator. For more ideas, take a look at this list of [healthy recipes](#).

Get outdoors and move. Both exercise and nature are beneficial to physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. Read more about how to get the most of your exercise by going green and [enhance your wellbeing in nature](#). It is important to move throughout the day, not just add exercise to the beginning or end of your day. Sitting all day has detrimental impacts on health even for those who are regular exercisers. Nature can also be woven into your day beyond just getting outside. Consider making your workspace near a window to include natural light. Add a plant to your work station, or use a sound machine with nature sounds to provide a sense of calm and drown out distractions.

Engage in social connection while maintaining physical distancing. There are many ways to nurture relationships and stay connected during this period of staying at home. [Healthy relationships are a vital component of wellbeing](#). Reach out to family and friends in order to nurture those relationships. Check in on the most vulnerable people in your life such as an elderly family member or neighbor or front line healthcare providers you know personally. Letting someone else know you care about them is good for them, but it also enhances your own wellbeing.

Don't forget to laugh! [It can feel wonderful to laugh - and it's good for us](#). Even during times of great stress and challenge, we can strengthen relationships and enhance our wellbeing by allowing ourselves to embrace humor and share laughter.

Finally, consider using this time of forced introspection to [assess your overall wellbeing and set a goal](#). Maybe you've been meaning to eat healthier, move more, or practice a new skill like mindfulness, but you just haven't had the time. Make the most of the time you gain by not commuting and having less after work and school commitments to focus on the health and wellbeing of yourself and your family.

